

Indiana House of Representatives

News and Information

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STILWELL: WHO WILL DST HELP?; TIME CHANGE REQUIRES MORE PLANNING

INDIANAPOLIS -- As lawmakers debate the merits of enacting daylight-saving time in Indiana, State Rep. Russ Stilwell (D-Boonville) emphasized today that more study must take place before such an important issue takes effect.

Indiana House members are considering Senate Bill 127, which would bring daylight-saving time to most of the state on June 5. Stilwell, who questions whether the time change is needed, supports a plan that would gauge public interest in the move.

"This decision should really be left up to the counties and the people of Indiana," said Stilwell. "It would make more sense for them to vote on whether or not they want to observe daylight-saving time. If this is what the people really want, then they should be the ones who make it happen."

It is up to the state to decide if it wants to observe daylight-saving time. However, the state must petition the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) to determine which time zone the state will observe. The responsibility for regulating and enforcing time laws was transferred to the USDOT when it was created in 1966.

When the daylight-saving time bill first appeared before a House committee earlier this session, House Democrats attempted to add an amendment that would have required a vote by the citizens of Indiana to decide whether they would like to petition for a time change. The amendment was defeated along party lines.

Stilwell said Gov. Mitch Daniels has changed his position on the time zone Indiana should be in if daylight-saving time is instituted.

"The governor is frequently reminding us of the issues that he campaigned on and that the issues he is tackling as governor are the same issues he said he would tackle when he was a candidate," said Stilwell. "Yet when it comes to daylight-saving time, he has changed his tune. We no longer hear him expounding on the benefits of Indiana adopting Central Time. Instead, it seems that the governor would rather us adopt Eastern Time. Southwest Indiana has much more in common with St. Louis and Evansville than with New York or Boston."

Stilwell also takes issue with the proposed start date to observe daylight-saving time.

"If we are going to start observing daylight-saving time, then we should wait until all of Indiana is on the same time zone," said Stilwell. "If the argument for daylight-saving time is the economic benefits it could bring, it makes no sense for any counties in Indiana to be on a different time zone. June 5 is too early to get all counties on one time zone. The June 5 start date for daylight-saving time is purposeless and ridiculous."

Overall, Stilwell feels the issue is something that requires more planning.

"It seems that people are saying they are for daylight-saving time or against it without looking at how it is going to affect the citizens of Indiana," said Stilwell. "What proof do we have that changing our clocks will make us a more prosperous state? What proof do we have that going with New York time is more profitable than observing St. Louis time? Before we change something as drastic as our time, we should first have the answers to all of the questions."